

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----171624Z 042137 /41

O R 171612Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3975
INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08129

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: RH, PFOR, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: MEETING WITH SITHOLE

REF: LONDON 8086, LONDON 8087

SUMMARY: SITHOLE CALLED ON CHARGE MAY 17. HIS MAIN POINT WAS: SMITH WILL TRY ONCE MORE TO BLOCK RESOLUTION OF RHODESIAN PROBLEM UNLESS YOU GET HIM TO RESIGN NOW, RATHER THAN INVOLVE HIM IN THE UPCOMING DISCUSSIONS WHICH ENVISAGE HIM RESIGNING LATER IN ANY CASE. OUR REPLY: HE WON'T RESIGN NOW, BUT THE CURRENT CONSULTATIVE GROUP EXERCISE OFFERS A CHANCE OF SUCCESS; LET'S GIVE IT THAT CHANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. SITHOLE CALLED ON CHARGE MAY 17. SITHOLE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY ZANU SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS NOEL GABRIEL MUKONO AND ZANU LONDON REP AUSTIN CHAKAODZA. ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRIEDMAN ALSO ATTENDED.

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2. AFTER EXPRESSING HIS APPRECIATION FOR US INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIA DISCUSSIONS, WHICH HE SAW AS SUPPLYING BACKING NECESSARY FOR RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM SINCE THE UK HAD LOST CONTROL, SITHOLE CAME TO THE KEY POINT ON WHICH HE AND HIS AIDES FOCUSSED UNERRINGLY THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CONVERSATION, IN ESSENCE: "SMITH IS IN MANY WAYS THE AUTHOR OF THE PRESENT PROBLEM, HE HAS BEEN THE

PROBLEM IN ALL PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION, HE IS TO BE ASKED TO RESIGN AT A LATER STAGE IN THE PROCESS ANYWAY, SO WHY NOT HAVE HIM RESIGN NOW IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE SOLUTION WE ARE ALL SEEKING? IN ALL THE EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE RHODESIAN ISSUE, SMITH HAS REMAINED A CONSTANT FACTOR, AND FAILURE HAS BEEN A CONSTANT RESULT. AREN'T WE HEADING FOR THE SAME RESULT NOW?"

3. IN THE TO AND FRO OF DISCUSSION ON THIS SUBJECT, WE SPELLED OUT THE RATIONALE OF THE CURRENT EFFORT ALONG LINES CONVEYED TO HIM THE DAY BEFORE BY THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (REFTELS). INTER ALIA, WE EXPLAINED THAT THE OBJECT OF THE UK/US APPROACH WAS TO SET IN TRAIN A POLITICAL PROCESS THAT WOULD RESULT IN SMITH LEAVING, TO BRING RHODESIA TO INDEPENDENCE BY POLITICAL ACTION UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES OF MINIMUM VIOLENCE. THE IDEA OF THE CURRENT EFFORT WAS TO BYPASS THE STAGE THAT HAD RESULTED IN IMPASSE AT GENEVA (CONCENTRATION ON STRUCTURE OF INTERIM GOVERNMENT) AND INSTEAD MOVE DIRECTLY TO WORKING OUT A CONSTITUTION FOR AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE THAT WOULD BE BROADLY ACCEPTABLE TO MOST OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED. SMITH SIMPLY WOULD NOT RESIGN NOW. THE SITUATION WOULD BE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT HAD BEEN BEFORE IF SMITH REFUSED TO RESIGN AFTER BROAD AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON A CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT -- AND ON AN INTERIM PROCESS BETWEEN HIS RESIGNATION AND THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE -- THAT PEOPLE INVOLVED BELIEVED WOULD WORK. IT MIGHT NOT PROVE CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE TO ARRIVE AT A CONSENSUS ON A CONSTITUTION, BUT THE US AND UK BELIEVED IT WAS WORTH TRYING. THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION WAS DEEPLY DETERMINED ON AFRICAN POLICY, DR. OWEN AS FOREIGN SECRETARY WAS ANOTHER ELEMENT OF CHANGE, AND THE US HAD ENDORSED THE UK OBJECTIVE OF INDEPENDENCE FOR ZIMBABWE UNDER MAJORITY RULE IN 1978. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE AT THIS STAGE TO SPELL OUT WHAT KIND OF PRESSURES THE US AND OTHERS MIGHT APPLY, BUT WE WERE CONVINCED THAT IT WAS WORTHWHILE TO GIVE ANOTHER POLITICAL EFFORT THE CHANCE TO WORK. THE RHODESIAN SITUATION HAD EVOLVED TO SMITH'S DISADVANTAGE SINCE THE DAYS OF THE TIGER AND THE FEARLESS TALKS A DECADE AGO. WE BELIEVED SMITH RECOGNIZED THIS FACT AND THAT HE NOW HAD REASON TO CONSIDER IT BETTER TO TRY TO NEGOTIATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INEVITABLE TRANSFER OF POWER RATHER THAN TO FIGHT TO THE END. HE WOULDN'T RESIGN NOW SINCE HE NATURALLY WANTED TO HAVE HIS SAY IN THE DISCUSSIONS, BUT THAT DID NOT MEAN HE WOULD REFUSE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 08129

EXDIS

TO RESIGN LATER WHEN THE APPROPRIATE STAGE IN A
REASONABLE PROCESS WAS REACHED.

4. TOWARD THE END OF THE MEETING, MUKONO REITERATED
THE OPINION THAT SMITH'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE CURRENT
UK/US PROGRAM AS AN OBJECTIVE CONSTITUTED BUYING TIME
ON HIS PART. HE WONDERED IF MORE TANGIBLE PRESSURES
COULD NOT BE APPLIED WHILE THE CONSULTATIONS WERE
GOING ON, AND SUGGESTED OIL SUPPLIES AS AN EXAMPLE.
HE CITED THE NEED FOR A TWO-FOLD STRATEGY, ENCOMPASSING
PRESSURES AS WELL AS DIPLOMATIC MEASURES. SITHOLE
REMARKED THAT IF PRESSURES WERE BROUGHT ON SMITH TO
RESIGN NOW, THAT MIGHT EVEN INDUCE HIM TO BE MORE
COOPERATIVE WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL EXERCISE TAKING
PLACE.

5. THE MEETING ENDED WITH EXPRESSIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE
OF STAYING IN TOUCH, AND THE CHARGE REITERATING THAT
WE WOULD BE GLAD TO HEAR ANY SPECIFIC IDEAS SITHOLE
MIGHT HAVE.

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6. WE ARE BRIEFING FCO ON THIS DISCUSSION WITH SITHOLE.

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